



1.3 Introduction to Pacific Collections: Overview of Pacific Collections in Scotland



Pacific Collections in Scottish Museums

The collections held by the four partner museums involved in the *Pacific Collections in Scottish Museums: Unlocking their knowledge and potential* project reflect wider trends in Pacific material held elsewhere in Scotland. Overall, the collections date largely from the late 19th and early 20th centuries and are representative of the activities of Scots in the Pacific. A high proportion of artefacts are from Papua New Guinea with material from Fiji and Vanuatu also being prevalent. The smallest proportion of material was acquired from countries in Micronesia, although weapons from Kiribati are common in collections. There are some particularly significant Polynesian artefacts collected on early voyages.

Overview of project partner collections

The University of Aberdeen Museums

The University of Aberdeen's ethnographic collections from the Pacific reflect the activities of travellers, collectors and alumni from Aberdeen. There are around 3,500 items. Some of the earliest objects in the collection were donated by Christopher Nockells, who graduated from Kings College in 1816. He collected Māori artefacts and other items from Polynesia while in the Pacific from 1816-23. Colonial activity is represented by material collected by colonial administrators, such as Arthur J L Gordon (Fiji), Sir William MacGregor (Fiji and New Guinea) and Lord and Lady Stonehaven (New Guinea and Australia). The MacGregor collection is of particular significance and forms the majority of the entire Pacific collection. Missionary activity is exemplified by the collections of Reverend Frederick Bowie and his wife Jeannie Mutch who were in Vanuatu in 1896-1933. As with some other donors, their collection includes personal notebooks and photographs.

Glasgow Museums

Glasgow Museums Pacific collection contains just over 3,000 objects from across the region, collected from the late 18th century to the present day, including a significant number of rare or unique artefacts of historical interest. The earliest object is a Māori free-standing ancestral figure, one of only six acknowledged to exist, brought to Britain after 1780 by Midshipman Samuel Folker. Also in the collection are the only known surviving ceremonial turtle posts from Dauar Island, part of a large donation from Torres Straits and Papua New Guinea gifted by Robert Bruce in 1889. Bruce was a Glasgow ship's engineer and London Missionary Society teacher who lived and worked on Mer Island with his family. In addition to historical artefacts, the collection boasts fine examples of contemporary Pacific art including pieces by Tom Deko and Chimbu artist Mathias Kauage OBE, both of Papua New Guinea, and Alick Tipoti of Torres Strait Islands.

National Museums Scotland

There are around 5,000 objects from the Pacific in the World Cultures collection of National Museums Scotland. The collection had its beginnings in the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, the University of Edinburgh Natural History Museum and the Royal Society of Edinburgh. It contains early voyage material including objects from the journeys of Captain James Cook (1772-

79) and Captain Beechey (1825-28). Since the founding of the Royal Museum in 1854, Pacific material has been actively collected through links with Scottish soldiers, missionaries, traders, explorers and emigrants. The collection encompasses domestic material, clothing and personal ornament, textiles (including an extensive collection of barkcloth), weapons, tools, model boats and musical instruments. Particular objects are associated with important individuals, such as Tahitian artefacts from the late 19th century brought to Scotland by Princess Titaua of Tahiti after her marriage to George Darsie of Fife. The museum continues to acquire both historical and contemporary material.

Perth Museum and Art Gallery

The World Cultures collection of Perth Museum and Art Gallery has its origins with the Perth Literary and Antiquarian Society and was substantially amassed in the nineteenth century. There are around 450 artefacts from the Pacific collected by surgeons, sea captains, travellers and entrepreneurs from Perth. These individuals collected wherever they travelled and sent items back to their home town for study and display. One of the key collectors was surgeon David Ramsay, who was active in the Pacific throughout the 1820s and 30s. He acquired nearly 40 objects including many items from New Zealand, as well as artefacts from Fiji and the Society Islands. Of particular note from the Ramsay collection are a unique Māori feather cloak covered in kākāpō (night parrot) feathers, and a complete Tahitian mourner's costume.